

Message Text

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UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 JERUSALEM 2517

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1. AS REQUESTED REFTEL, POST IS TRANSMITTING FOLLOWING
TEXT OF "JERUSALEM POST" STORY DATED JUNE 9, 1978 ENTITLED
"DIGGING AT DAVID'S CITY." WE WILL PROVIDE FURTHER
COMMENT IN SEPTTEL LATER.

2. BEGIN TEXT: "AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSAULT ON DAVID'S
CITY, SITE OF THE ORIGINAL JERUSALEM, WILL GET UNDER-
WAY NEXT MONTH WITH THE LARGEST BUDGET EVER FIXED FOR
A DIG IN ISRAEL.

3. "THE EXCAVATION ON THE OPHEL, THE NARROW RIDGE SOUTH
OF THE TEMPLE MOUNT, WILL BE A 3,000 YEAR TIME PROBE
AIMED PRINCIPALLY AT UNCOVERING REMAINS OF THE JEBUSITE
CITY CAPTURED BY DAVID AND THE CAPITAL HE AND HIS SON
SOLOMON DEVELOPED ON THE SITE.

4. "CHANCES OF FINDING SUBSTANTIAL REMAINS FROM THOSE
PERIODS ARE CONSIDERED SLIM, BUT THE POSSIBILITY OF
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SHEDDING LIGHT ON THIS FORMATIVE PERIOD OF THE JEWISH
NATION AND OF JERUSALEM IS CONSIDERED SO IMPORTANT BY THE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AUTHORITIES AS TO WARRANT THE CONSIDERABLE
EFFORTS INVOLVED.

5. "THE DIG, HEADED BY DR. YIGAL SHILOF OF THE HEBREW
UNIVERSITY, IS SCHEDULED FOR FIVE YEARS BUT WILL CONTINUE

BEYOND THAT IF JUSTIFIED BY THE RESULTS. THE DIG WILL COMPLETE THE CYCLE OF LARGE-SCALE EXCAVATIONS CARRIED OUT IN BIBLICAL JERUSALEM SINCE 1967

6. "PROF. BINYAMIN MAZAR LAST YEAR CONCLUDED HIS DIG AT THE FOOT OF THE TEMPLE MOUNT AFTER NINE CONSECUTIVE YEARS. THE JEWISH QUARTER DIGS BY PROF. NAHMAN AVIGAD, HAD BEGUN ABOUT THE SAME TIME, ARE TO CONCLUDE THIS FALL, "SINCE 1967, EVERYTHING WE KNEW ABOUT JERUSALEM HAS CHANGED," SAYS SHILOH. "THIS IS THE LAST PART OF THE PUZZLE FOR THIS GENERATION."

7. "BUDGET FOR EACH YEAR'S DIG IS \$250,000, ACCORDING TO YOSEF AVIRAM, HEAD OF THE ISRAEL EXPLORATION SOCIETY, THIS IS LARGER THAN THE ANNUAL BUDGETS FOR THE MAZAR AND AVIGAD EXPEDITIONS COMBINED. SOME OF THE MONEY WILL GO TOWARDS RESTORATION AND PUBLICATION. ALL OF IT IS FROM FOREIGN SOURCES. THE EXPLORATION SOCIETY IS SPONSORING THE DIG TOGETHER WITH THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY.

THERE HAVE BEEN MORE THAN A DOZEN DIGS OVER THE PAST CENTURY ON THE OPHEL, THE EASTERNMOST OF THE TWO SHORT RIDGES PROJECTING SOUTH FROM THE OLD CITY. THE WESTERNMOST RIDGE, MOUNT ZION, HAD BEEN CONSIDERED THE SITE OF DAVID'S CITY AT LEAST FROM THE TIME JOSEPHUS WROTE 2,000 YEARS AGO BECAUSE IT WAS HIGHER, WIDER AND UNCLASSIFIED

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FLATTER. HOWEVER, ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE HAS CLEARLY SUBSTANTIATED THE BELIEF OF MODERN SCHOLARS THAT THE SKELETON LIKE EASTERN RIDGE IS THE TRUE SITE, CHOSEN BECAUSE OF ITS PROXIMITY TO THE GICHON SPRING AT ITS FOOT-DESPITE ITS PHYSICAL SHORTCOMINGS.

8. "PART OF SHILOH'S TASK WILL BE TO INVESTIGATE AND EXPAND ON THE FINDINGS OF HIS PREDECESSORS IN DAVID'S CITY PARTICULARLY THE FIRST AND THE LAST-CAPT. CHARLES WARREN AND DAME KATHLEEN KENYON. IN DIGS BEGUN IN 1867, WARREN, AN OFFICER IN THE ROYAL ENGINEERS, UNCOVERED A ROCK-CUT SHAFT LEADING FROM THE CITY SITE ON THE RIDGE TO THE SPRING. IT IS GENERALLY BELIEVED THAT THIS IS THE EMERGENCY ROUTE CREATED BY THE JEBUSITES TO REACH THEIR WATER SUPPLY WHEN SIEGE PREVENTED THEM FROM GOING OUT THRU THE CITY WALL TO THE SPRING IN THE KIDRON VALLEY BELOW. IT IS ALSO ASSUMED THAT THIS IS THE SHAFT UP WHICH JOAB CLIMBED WITH HIS SOLDIERS TO CAPTURE THE CITY FOR DAVID, AS TOLD IN THE BIBLE. THESE ARE ASSUMPTIONS SHILOH WILL RE-EXAMINE. HYDROLOGISTS WILL ALSO EXAMINE THE NATURE OF THE SPRING ITSELF.

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9. "KENYON, IN DIGS CARRIED OUT FROM 1961-7, BROUGHT MODERN ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODS TO THE SITE FOR THE FIRST TIME. SHE IDENTIFIED A SECTION OF THE ORIGINAL JEBUSITE CITY WALL AND OFFERED SOLUTIONS OF SOME OF THE BASIC QUESTION REGARDING THE SHAPE OF THE JEBUSITE AND DAVIDIC CITIES AND THE PLAN OF THE SOLOMONIC CITY. THESE SOLUTIONS, TOO, WILL BE RE-EXAMINED.

10. "SHILOH SAYS HE WILL NOT REOPEN THE AREA OF THE KENYON DIGS BUT EXTEND IT. ONE OF HIS FIRST ACTS AFTER RECEIVING HIS PRESENT ASSIGNMENT, WAS TO WRITE TO HER IN ENGLAND TO INFORM HER OF HIS INTENTIONS. ALTHOUGH MISS KENYON IS REGARDED IN SOME CIRCLES AS NOT PARTICULARLY FRIENDLY TO ISRAEL, SHE REPLIED IMMEDIATELY, OFFERING HER ASSISTANCE. SHE HAS PUBLISHED A POPULAR BOOK ON HER DIG, BUT HAS NOT YET PUBLISHED HER SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS. SHILOH HOPES TO AVAIL HIMSELF OF SOME OF HER MATERIAL WHEN HE VISITS ENGLAND.

11. "THE CHANCES OF COMING UP IN DAVID'S CITY WITH THE KIND OF VIVID AND MONUMENTAL FINDS MADE BY MAZAR AND AVIGAD APPEAR SMALL. THE 40-50 DUNAMS EMBRACED BY DAVID'S CITY COVER THE NARROW CREST AND A PORTION OF THE STEEP EASTERN SLOPE ABOVE THE SPRING. THIRTY CENTURIES OF
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EROSION AND BUILDING ACTIVITIES HAVE LEFT LITTLE ON THE SLOPE WHILE THE WINDS OF HISTORY HAVE APPARENTLY LEFT EVEN LESS ON THE CREST. KENYON STATES CATEGORICALLY THAT ROMAN QUARRYING AND BYZANTINE BUILDINGS HAVE DESTROYED ALL EVIDENCE OF PREVIOUS OCCUPATION ON THE RIDGE SUMMIT HERSELF, HOWEVER, HAD LITTLE OPPORTUNITY TO DIG THERE.

MORE THAN HALF THE SITE IS COVERED WITH HOUSES, MANY OF THEM BUILT SINCE 1948. SHILOH WILL ATTEMPT TO LEASE GARDENS AND OTHER OPEN SPACE FOR EXCAVATION PURPOSES, THE SITE TO BE COVERED OVER AND RETURNED TO THE OWNER AFTER THE DIG'S COMPLETION. HIS MAIN EFFORT, HOWEVER, WILL BE IN TWO OPEN AREAS ON THE EAST SLOPE. ONE CONSISTS OF ABOUT FIVE DUNAMS OF ADJACENT TO THE MAIN KENYON EXCAVATIONS. THE OTHER IS A 20-DUNAM TRACT PURCHASED BY BARON EDMOND DE ROTHSCHILD BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND PARTIALLY EXCAVATED BY THE FRENCH ARCHAEOLOGIST RAYMOND WEILL.

12. "UNUSUAL ROCK CUTTINGS FOUND BY WEILL ON THE SITE WERE IDENTIFIED BY HIM AS THE ROYAL TOMBS OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID, AN IDENTIFICATION VERY MUCH DOUBTED BY MODERN ARCHAEOLOGISTS. ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE, DAVID, SOLOMON AND OTHER KINGS WERE BURIED INSIDE THE CITY, WHEREAS ORDINARY BURIAL WAS OUTSIDE. SHILOH SAYS HE IS SKEPTICAL ABOUT FINDING THE ROYAL TOMBS, BUT HE CANNOT DISMISS THE POSSIBILITY, THERE IS MORE CHANCE OF FINDING A TOMB THAN THE REMAINS OF DAVID'S OR SOLOMON'S PALACES.

13. "THE ROTHSCHILD TRACT WAS EVENTUALLY TRANSFERRED TO THE JEWISH NATIONAL FUND AND THEN THE ISRAEL LANDS ADMINISTRATION. DURING JORDANIAN RULE, IT WAS LISTED IN THEIR LANDS REGISTRY UNDER ROTHSCHILD'S NAME AND WAS NOT UNCLASSIFIED

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BUILT UPON.

14. "SHILOH, 40, HAS NEVER LED A MAJOR DIG BUT HAS SPECIALIZED IN BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY. HIS YOUTH WAS ONE OF THE FACTORS IN HIS BEING CHOSEN TO HEAD WHAT IS EXPECTED TO BE AN ARDUOUS JOB. HE IS ASSEMBLING AN INTERDISCIPLINARY STAFF THAT WILL INCLUDE EXPERTS ON COINS, GEOLOGY, BONES, POLLEN (AS EVIDENCE ABOUT VEGETATIONS) AND HYDROLOGY. ABOUT 100 PERSONS, INCLUDING VOLUNTEERS AND ARACHAEOLOGY STUDENTS, WILL PARTICIPTE. MODERN ELECTRONIC DEVICES CAPABLE OF TRACING THE LINE OF BURIED WALLS BENEATHSTING HOUSES WILL ALSO BE USED. AMONG THE QUESTION SHILOH WANTS TO RESOLVE IS THE SHAPE OF THE FORTIFICATIONS OF THE CITY OF DAVID AND THE TOWN PLANS OF THE JEBUSITE AND DAVIDIC CITIES.

15. "UNLIKE THE MAZAR AND AVIGAD DIGS, WHICH PROCEEDED VIRTUALLY WITHOUT PAUSE BECUASE OF VARIOUS PRESSURES, SHILOH PLANS TO REVERT TO THE USUAL ARCHAEOLOTICAL PACE BY DIGGING FOR TWO OR THREE MONTHS A YEAR DURING THE SUMMER AND SPENDING THE REST OF THE YEAR SORTING OUT AND ANALYZING HIS FINDS.

16. "THE EXCAVATIONS ON PUBLIC LAND WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK BEING DEVELOPED ALONG THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE OLD CITY WALL. FINANCING AND ADMINISTRATION WILL BE HANDLED BY AN OTTOMAN SOCIETY HEADED BY MAYOR TEDDY KOLLEK AND CALLED THE CITY OF DAVID SOCIETY FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS, PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION. FINANCING IS COMING FROM TWO SOURCES--THE SOUTH AFRICAN BRANCH OF THE JERUSALEM FOUNDATION, HEADED BY MENDEL KAPLAN OF JOHANNESBURG, AND THE AMBASSADOR INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL FOUNDATION IN THE U.S.

17. "SOME ISRAELI ARCHAEOLOGISTS SEE SHILOH'S DIG AS UNCLASSIFIED

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BEING UNLIKELY TO ADVANCE SUBSTANTIALY THE KNOWLEDGE OF JERUSALM'S EARLIEST PERIOD. OTHERS GIVE HIM A "50-50 CHANCE." AS ONE PUT IT THIS WEEK. SHILOH HIMSELF IS OPTIMISTIC. "I'M SURE WE WILL HAVE LOTS OF SURPRISES," HE SAYS." END OF TEXT.
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